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LETTER

FROM THE

SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

OF

K Pennsylvania, State of.

BY DIRECTION OF THE GOVERNOR,

RELATIVE TO THE LATE MALIGNANT FEVER; AND REPORT OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS, OF THE MARINE AND CITY HOSPITALS, IN REPLY.

A. J. Dallas

PHILADELPHIA:

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BRITISH
MUSEUM

Secretary's Letter.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Governor is desirous of submitting to the Legislature, a comprehensive view of the mortality and expenditure, produced by the calamity, which has recently afflicted the City and its Suburbs. He, therefore, directs me to request, that you will favour him with a Report, and the necessary documents, upon the subject. The information contemplated may be properly embraced, perhaps, by the following enquiries.

1st. At what time, in what place, and in what manner, was the malignant Fever introduced into the City and Suburbs?

2d. How long did the Fever continue to rage, and what is the number of its victims?

3d. What was the general police pursued by the Board, the overseers of the Poor, and their Agents, to subdue, or mitigate the disease, to aid the sick, to inter the dead, and to maintain the Poor?

4th. What sum has been raised on this occasion, by taxes, by voluntary loan, and by gratuitous contributions; what sum has been expended, and what balance remains on hand?

5th. What is the number and condition of the Citizens who have been relieved, and will any extraordinary aid be necessary, on the part of the Legislature, for the support of the Poor during the ensuing Winter:

6th. What precautions ought to be taken to prevent the recurrence of so dreadful a calamity.

Permit me to add, that it is the Governor's wiſh that the Overſeers of the Poor, and, particularly, thoſe active Citizens, who ſuperintended the buſineſs of the Camps, ſhould be conſulted in forming your Report. As the Legiſlature meets on the 4th of December, I hope it will be convenient for you, to comply with the Governor's requeſt, in the courſe of the preſent month.

I have the honor to be,
with ſentiments of ſincere
reſpect, and eſteem,
Gentlemen,

Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,
A. J. DALLAS.
Secretary.

Secretary's Office, Philadelphia,
8th November, 1798.

To the Preſident and Managers of the
Marine and City Hoſpitals.

Reply.

Health-Office, 1ſt. December, 1798.

SIR,

THE Secretary of the Commonwealth, in a communication of the 8th. ult. by your direction, having propounded certain queries relative to the late dreadful calamity, a ſenſe of duty, common intereſt, and a poignant retroſpect of the paſt ſcenes of miſery and wretchedneſs, which came more immediately under our care, have excited an intenſe ſolicitude and aſſiduity, on our part, to anſwer ſatisfactorily your inquiries, and deviſe means for the prevention of ſo terrible a ſcourge in future.

We regret that the continuance of the diſeaſe to ſo late a period has delayed the adjuſtment of the accounts of the inſtitutions under our direction, and will conſequently deprive us of that accuracy which is deſirable. We believe, however, that the report will not ultimately be found materially incorrect.

A few preliminary remarks, relative to the precautions which have been taken in order to prevent the importation of diſeaſe, may not be ſuperfluous.

The law, in reſpect to quarantine, has been conſtrued and executed in the ſtricteſt ſenſe. Every power and effort which the Board, or the officers under their direction, were capable of exerciſing, has been employed to cut off all communication with the veſſels under quarantine.—Every poſſible mode of purification, which a law ſo manifeſtly defective would permit, has been adopted, and the moſt rigid ſcrutiny had, before the veſſels were permitted to proceed to the city.

At the Marine Hoſpital, the fences were extended into the river, the more completely to encloſe the premiſes, and all intercourſe therewith precluded.

For the ſake of perſpicuity we ſhall conform, as near as poſſible, to the order in which you have preſented the ſeveral ſubjects of enquiry; and

1ſt. The malignant fever, according to our information, firſt made its appearance in Water ſtreet, between Spruce and Walnut ſtreets, about the firſt of Auguſt. Several reſpectable phyſicians declare that it appeared in the month of June; and, that many unequivocal caſes occurred early in July.

Unſhackled by prejudice and diffident of opinion, we have endeavoured to trace the diſeaſe to its origin, but without ſucceſs. Thoſe objects which have been pointed to with the greateſt confidence as the foreign ſource of the diſeaſe, on inveſtigation, afford no ſuch proof.

Thus ſituated, it would be indecorous, in an official report to the Chief Magiſtrate, to ſubſtitute opinion for fact. We deem a queſtion, on which the lives of thouſands and the proſperity or annihilation of our flouriſhing city may depend, of too much importance to reſt upon the *excluſive ſpeculation* of either foreign or domeſtic origin.

In our anſwer to your 6th query, we ſhall endeavour to deſignate ſuch general meaſures as, when properly digeſted by legiſlative wiſdom, are, in our judgment, beſt calculated to guard againſt the recurrence of ſo fatal a malady from either domeſtic or foreign ſources.

2d. The diſeaſe continued to rage until about the firſt of November; and, partially, until about the 5th. The whole number of victims, excluſive of thoſe who died in the country, are three thouſand ſix hundred and forty-five.

3d. The City Hoſpital was opened on the 7th Auguſt.—all veſſels were immediately removed by order of the Board from all the wharves included between Mr. Levi Hollingſworth's and Tun Alley.—The Board publicly admoniſhed the inhabitants of the infected neighbourhood to remove without delay.—A quantity of damaged coffee and cocoa, imported on the 30th July, and ſtored in Roſs's ſtores, was reported on the 3d Auguſt to the Board to be in a putrid ſtate. It was immediately put on board the veſſel in which it was imported, and ſent down to the Marine Hoſpital for purification.

Two ſkilful phyſicians and two aſſiſtants were appointed to reſide at the City Hoſpital, with a competent number of nurſes and attendants, and every thing neceſſary for the comfort and relief of the patients was provided. All the powers of reaſoning, perſuaſion, and authority, which the Board poſſeſſed, ſhort of abſolute coercion, were aſſiduouſly employed to induce the ſick to remove inſtantly to the Hoſpital; for which purpoſe carriages conſtantly attended, and litters were conſtructed as ſpeedily as poſſible, to convey them with eaſe and convenience.

All the regular practiſing phyſicians of the City and Liberties were authorized to grant orders for admiſſion into the City Hoſpital.—Hearſes and perſons were employed for the ſpeedy removal and interment of the dead, and the Health-Office kept open day and night, for the purpoſe of receiving applications and executing the duties of the office with promptitude.

In order to aſcertain the progreſs of the diſeaſe and form ſome criterion by which to judge of its extenſion or decline, as well as to mark thoſe parts of the city and liberties in which it raged with the greateſt violence, a ſuitable perſon was appointed to obtain from the phyſicians the daily reports of new caſes which occurred in their practice ſeverally, together with the names and reſidence of the patients.

Skilful phyſicians were appointed to attend the poor of the City and Liberties, and medicines provided for their uſe at the expence of the inſtitution.

The buildings at the City Hoſpital being found inſufficient, a houſe contiguous thereto was rented; the ſummer houſes were covered with canvas, a number of ſheds, and a new frame building 60 by 20 feet, two ſtories high, were erected for the better accommodation of the ſick.

The alarming progreſs of the diſeaſe, and frightful increaſe of mortality; the apparent temerity or apathy of ſome, and the indigence and diſtreſs of others, impelled the Board to reiterate in terms the moſt impreſſive, their admonitions to the inhabitants who were in circumſtances to abandon their homes; and, in conjunction with the Guardians of the poor, to provide a retreat for the indigent.

Tents were accordingly erected on the eaſt bank of Schuylkill, to which they were invited to reſort, and ample proviſion was there made for their comfort and ſupport. Theſe meaſures being inadequate to the urgency of the occaſion, temporary buildings for the accommodation of near two thouſand perſons were erected on Maſters' Ground, two miles above the city.

The regulation and ſuperintendance of each encampment was confided to a committee of reſpectable and humane citizens, who voluntarily undertook the arduous taſk.

By the joint authority of the Board of Managers and the Board of Guardians of the Poor, a committee of reſpectable citizens were appointed for the diſtribution of relief to the poor of the City and Liberties, whoſe ſituation rendered it improper to remove to the tents.

The infected houſes and bedding were cleanſed and purified by order of the Board ſo far as was found practicable. This, however, was but partial, owing to the inevitable difficulties and confuſion occaſioned by the calamity.

4th. The amount raiſed by taxes and by loan in anticipation of the taxes to be levied the preſent year for the ſupport of the Marine and City Hoſpitals, viz:

Borrowed on account of the taxes for the year 1797,	D. 7268 09	
A tax of 10,000 Dollars has been levied for the preſent year; the ſum collected on account thereof is,	676 87	
Received of the Bank of Pennſylvania, on the credit of the taxes of the preſent year,	20,000 00	
		27,944 96

Private Loan.

Borrowed of the ſeveral Banks, on ſecurity of certain individuals, for the relief of the poor, under the joint direction of the Board of Managers and the Board of Guardians of the Poor, which ſum was borrowed on the faith of Legiſlative reimburſement,	29,000 00
Total raiſed by taxes and loans,	Dols. 56,944 96

Gratuitous Contributions Received For The Use Of The Poor.

By the Board of Managers of the Marine and City Hoſpitals.

In Caſh,	D. 14040 05	
In produce and cloathing valued at	2000	
		16,040 05

By the Committee of the Tents on the Banks of Schuylkill.

In Caſh,	D. 3537 29	
In produce and cloathing valued at	5000	
		8537 29

By the Committee of the Encampment at Maſters' place.

In caſh,	Dols. 3,254 27	
In produce and cloathing, valued at	6,568 22	
		9,822 49

By the Committee for the relief of the Poor in the City and Liberties.

In caſh,	Dols. 420 00	
In produce and cloathing valued at	1,178 68	
		1,598 68
Total,	Dols.	35,998 51

SUMS EXPENDED BY THE SEVERAL INSTITUTIONS.

By the Board of Managers of the Marine and City Hoſpitals.

In caſh for the relief of the ſick poor,	D. 9,782 56	
In produce and cloathing, valued at	2,000 00	
Paid the diſtributing committee	4,257 49	
Paid on account Marine and City Hoſpitals,	20,975 20	
		37,015 25

By the Committee of the Tents, on the Banks of Schuylkill.

In caſh, of which 10,000 dollars was a part of the 29,000 dollars loan,	D. 13,537 29	
In produce and cloathing valued at	5,000	
		18,537 29

By the Committee of the Encampment at Maſters' Place.

In caſh, of which 9000 dollars was a part of the 29,000 dollars loan,	D. 12,254 27	
In produce and cloathing valued at	6,568 22	
		18,822 49

By the Committee for the relief of the poor in the City and Liberties.

In caſh, of which 10,000 dol-lars was a part of the 29,000 dollar loan,	D. 14,677 49	
Deduct ſo much charged in the expenditures of the Board of Managers, of the Marine and City Hoſpitals, paid to this committee for diſtribution,	4,257 49	
		10,420
In produce and cloathing valued at	1,178 68	
		11,598 68
Total, Dollars,		85,973 71

Recapitulation of the preceding ſtatement.

Total amount of taxes and loans	56,944 96	
Total amount of gratuitous contributions	35,998 51	92,943 47
Total amount expended by the ſeveral inſtitutions,		85,973 71
Balance in the hands of the Treaſurer of the Marine and City Hoſpitals	Dollars	6,969 76

Note, the above balance is on account of the Marine and City Hoſpitals. This ſum, however, will be inadequate to the diſcharge of the debts now due by the ſaid inſtitutions.

Number of Perſons relieved, viz.

At the City Hoſpital,	879
By the Phyſicians appointed by the Board of Managers of the Marine and City Hoſpitals to attend the poor of the City and Liberties about,	3000
At the tents on Schuylkill and the vicinity thereof,	1950
At the encampment on Maſters' Place and its vicinity,	2024
By the Committee for diſtributing relief in the City and Liberties about,	3500
Total	11,353

Excluſive of the above expenditures and number of perſons relieved, the guardians of the poor have incurred a very great and extraordinary expence for the relief of orphans and perſons diſtreſſed by the calamity.

5th. The poor will, doubtleſs, require extraordinary aid from the legiſlature the enſuing winter, in conſequence of the ſuſpenſion of labour during the prevalence of the diſeaſe, the extraordinary expenſes incurred by ſickneſs, or removal from the city, and, in all probability, a ſhort interval from the return of the citizens to the cloſing of the navigation for the exerciſe of induſtry.

6th. No queſtion can be more intereſting, none more entitled to ſerious conſideration, than that which ſhall determine the precautions to be adopted, in order to prevent the recurrence of a calamity ſo deſtructive. Accordingly, we find our fellow citizens generally engaged in the contemplation and diſcuſſion of the ſubject.

Whatever difference of opinion may exiſt as to its origin, ALL appear to agree in the general ſyſtem of police neceſſary to guard againſt its introduction in future.

The idea of reſorting to the legiſlature of the union, for an act to interdict the commerce from the Mediterranean and Weſt-Indies, during the Summer months, appears to be general, and if attainable, would certainly be moſt deſirable, at leaſt until ſome effectual ſyſtem ſhall be deviſed and completely ready for execution.

The great diverſity of ſentiment which appears to prevail in the different ſtates, relative to the origin of the diſeaſe, together with the powerful influence of commercial intereſt and rivalſhip, may create inſurmountable obſtacles to the attainment of an efficient law from the general government.

Under theſe circumſtances, we think it will be prudent to perſevere with energy in an application to the ſtate legiſlature, for effectual quarantine and Health laws, with liberal endowments for the ſupport of the ſeveral inſtitutions. It may here be proper to obſerve that a well digeſted quarantine law of this ſtate

will be neceſſary (even in the event of a law of the general government) to provide for the eaſe of veſſels which may enter our port from ſtreſs of weather, or other caſualty during the period of interdiction.

We take the liberty of ſuggeſting the propriety of an application to the governments of the ſtates of Delaware and New-Jerſey for their co-operation. The principles of common intereſt and ſelf-preſervation, and their participation in the late calamity, muſt dictate to them the neceſſity of ſuch a coalition.

A quarantine law to be effectual ſhould make proviſion for the following objects.

An inſular ſituation, remote from the City, ſhould be ſelected, if practicable, for the place of quarantine; if none ſuch can be obtained, forty or fifty acres on ſome convenient part of the Delaware ſhore ſhould be ſecured by a high and ſtrong encloſure—Wharves, ware houſes, and other ſuitable buildings ſhould be erected for the reception and purification of cargoes and accommodation of perſons.

All veſſels from the Mediterranean and Weſt Indies, from the firſt of June to the firſt October, ſhould there diſcharge their cargoes, which, together with the veſſels, ſhould be thoroughly purified, and perform a quarantine of at leaſt 20 days. Guards ſhould be conſtantly poſted at all the avenues, and guard boats ſtationed around the fleet.

The law ſhould provide for the prohibition of intercourſe by land or water with ſuch of our ſiſter ſtates as may not adopt efficient quarantine laws; and interdict all communication with infected places.

Having deſignated thoſe general regulations, which we conceive are beſt adapted to guard againſt the importation of diſeaſe,

we ſhall take the liberty of adverting to meaſures, which appear to us no leſs neceſſary to the health and proſperity of our city.

If the domeſtic origin of the diſeaſe is denied, yet it muſt be allowed that local cauſes have a potent effect in its diffuſion, and encreaſing its malignity; of this, fatal experience has furniſhed an irrefragable proof in the exceſſive mortality, and number of the diſeaſed, in particular parts of the City and Liberties.

We believe that theſe dreadful conſequences would be greatly mitigated, if not wholly averted, by a judicious reformation in the police of the city and liberties.

The introduction of wholeſome running water for domeſtic purpoſes, and for waſhing the ſtreets, and common ſewers, is in our judgment, an object of primary importance; the cleanſing of all the docks to a depth below the level of low water mark, a ſtrict attention to the removal of all filth and putrifying ſubſtances, and correcting the noxious effluvia from the privies in the commencement of the hot ſeaſon, would, we conceive, be productive of the happieſt effects.

The great attention which has been paid to the cleanſing of the beſt improved parts of our city, and the obvious neglect of remote and confined ſituations, has long been a ſubject of ſerious complaint.

Any work, however great, will be but partial whilſt the ſtagnant pools, and filth of the narrow lanes, alleys and yards, in the extremities of the city, and particularly in the diſtricts of Southwark and the Northern Liberties, are ſuffered to exiſt.

We beg leave to call your attention to a ſubject which we conſider as deeply intereſting.

The eſtabliſhment of a City Hoſpital upon an enlarged plan, permanently provided with every thing neceſſary for the comfort and relief of the ſick, and ſkillful profeſſors, nurſes, &c. proviſionally engaged in the event of a recurrence of the diſeaſe, would excite public confidence, and greatly diminiſh the evils of the calamity. The ſituation of the preſent City Hoſpital, we conſider as highly improper for the purpoſe, from its contiguity to the marſhes of the Schuylkill. The lots and improvements thereon, if ſold, would, probably produce a ſum equivalent to the purchaſe of an elevated ſituation, and the completion of buildings better adapted to the purpoſe.

We have been led into unavoidable prolixity from the magnitude of the ſubject, and a wiſh to contribute the reſult of our experience and obſervations. Should they produce, in any degree, the deſired effect, it will alleviate the recollection of thoſe painful ſcenes which it was our lot to witneſs, and our duty to relieve.

By order of the Board of Managers of the Marine and City Hoſpitals,

WILLIAM JONES, Preſident.

Atteſt,

TIMOTHY PAXSON, Clerk.

Thomas Mifflin Eſq. Governor of the Common-wealth of Pennſylvania.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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